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Interviews with
Frank J. Anderson, Jr.

Badrul Khan. To achieve the Defense Acquisition University's (DAU) vision as a premier corporate university, you have embraced a new learning paradigm that has shifted your focus from the traditional classroom of the 20th century to the total learning environment of the 21st century. In this new paradigm of the 21st century learning environment, e-learning is definitely a major component. Can you shed some light on e-learning initiatives at DAU and their impact in achieving the overall vision of DAU?

Frank J. Anderson, Jr. In just over five short years, the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) has been transformed from a single-dimensional training organization that only provided resident training into a multi-dimensional, corporate university that leverages best practices and technology to expand its products and services for the Department of Defense workforce. As the learning assets provider for the DoD AT&L workforce, the Defense Acquisition University Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L) is a strategic enabler ensuring the continued competence and success of the workforce. Through a virtual, continuous presence with the workforce and on the job worldwide, DAU products and services enhance workplace performance, promote mission effectiveness, and help to reshape the DoD AT&L workforce to meet future challenges.

Our headquarters is located at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia (close to its senior leadership in Washington, D.C. and the Pentagon). During our transformation, we have centralized strategic planning, performance and resource management, curriculum development, e-learning and technology development, career management, and support services. In addition, DAU has five regional campuses strategically located in areas where there is a high concentration of DoD AT&L workforce members.

"e" has played a huge role in our transformation and has helped make us what we are today! We could not have accomplished what we have nor exist without the "e." In

1999, only 638 of 32,000 graduates were touched by any type of distance learning. Since then, "e" has allowed us to increase our annual throughput to 109,000 in 2005. Now "e" touches all of our students in some form or fashion, whether it is embedded within the requirements of a classroom offering or online or access to our learning assets via the Internet from the workforce member's job site.

To optimize the great potential of "e," we a have adopted a world-class learning architecture. As an overarching learning architecture, the Performance Learning Model (PLM) is primarily performance-based. All learning activities are focused on enhancing job performance and workplace capability. The model itself is intended to be transparent to the learner, providing convenient and economical access to learning products 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Our customers should view the PLM as a useful learning network where they can seamlessly access learning assets. With PLM assets, our learners can engage in the classroom, online, in knowledge-sharing communities with the help of experts, and on the job—before, during, and after formal training events. If our learners are engaged, then our workforce members are engaged.

DAU is now helping to provide a learning environment for all AT&L organizations where learners are engaged—training courses, knowledge sharing, continuous learning, performance support, and rapid deployment training—with local learning resources and infrastructure via a learning network. Full deployment of the PLM as a network of learning assets is significantly expanding the learning environment for the 134,000 members of the AT&L workforce and has ensured alignment of DAU learning assets to the strategic goals of our senior leadership. This customer-focused approach significantly contributes to extending the concept of learning beyond the classroom into the workplace to engage the AT&L workforce at the point of need.

The real impact of our transformation explosion can be seen in our growth and efficiencies from 2001 to 2005: Since 2001 (with a relatively flat learning and development budget—investment per year) we have increased our students trained from 46,000 to 109,000 per year while at the same time reducing the faculty/staff from 548 to 540 and our student travel costs from $24M to $17M per year. Over this time, the average training cost per student has declined from $3,000 to $958 per student. This has allowed for sustaining continued growth by the reprioritization of resources into e-learning initiatives

Can you more fully describe DAU's Performance Learning Model (PLM)?

When we designed the Performance Learning Model, we completely transformed DAU's curriculum, methods of delivering training, and continuous learning opportunities. We depart from the traditional classroom and lecture setting and instead challenge and fully engage students through case-based instruction and learning activities. This has

required a complete rethinking on our part about how course material is delivered to students. Leveraging both e-learning and classroom training, we optimized a performance learning model that includes training, performance support, and continuous learning through the best e-learning practices and technology available, combined with case-based problem-solving learning opportunities.

Our certification training continues to be viewed as a vital product, but we have realized that it is also important to support the workforce when they are back on the job. This support includes the following areas:

Performance Support: DAU faculty members are engaging with program offices and other acquisition organizations to help resolve real-world technical and business problems. These performance-support efforts range from answering questions under the "Ask-A-Professor" program, to intensive process-consulting efforts, to designing targeted training programs unique to the user.

Communities of Practice (CoP): DAU has developed about two dozen Web-based communities of practice, which bring together AT&L workforce members, DAU faculty, and experts from industry and academia. Its members share informal learning, *ad hoc* problem-solving, professional networking, and mutual support. These CoPs provide context to the information and process knowledge contained within an organization. They are also an important technique that will allow individuals coming into the workforce from the private sector to more quickly grasp government procedures, thereby speeding and supporting the certification process. CoPs will come online in the future as needs demand.

Continuous Learning (CL): To support the AT&L workforce in reinforcing the competencies they have previously learned in certification courses and in meeting their requirements to maintain currency with new techniques and acquisition initiatives, DAU created an online Continuous Learning Center (CLC). The CLC, through the Virtual Campus, not only offers learning modules, but also provides regulation, policy and guidance resources, and collaboration tools that provide expertise from peers and other professionals. To date, over 150 modules have been established to include such topics as activity-based costing, market research, earned value management, and performance-based services acquisition. The number of modules will near 200 by the end of this fiscal year. The CLC has become an important learning resource for allowing our workforce to upgrade their skill sets to satisfy 21st Century workplace requirements. In the last two months of FY01, several hundred people registered on the free CLC Website. Now, five years later, the number has swollen to over 200,000 users.

Strategic Partnerships: Perhaps DAU's most significant initiative to promote the rapid certification of personnel entering the AT&L workforce from the private sector and to make commercial techniques available to the AT&L workforce is its strategic partnership program. DAU is reaching out to colleges, corporate universities, and professional organizations. This engagement is expanding

DAU's ability to quickly incorporate best practices, ideas, and initiatives from Congress, the private sector, and field acquisition organizations into DAU learning products. Just as importantly, it is enhancing the opportunities for workforce members and potential employees from industry to obtain certification course credits from non-DAU sources.

PLM has been recognized by several professional organizations/individuals as a best practice (e.g., ASTD and Brandon Hall). The DAU Performance Learning Model was recognized in 2005 by the US Distance Learning Association as the recipient of their highest award…the 21st Century Best Practice Award.

It appears that the performance learning model (PLM) is broad in scope, cutting across numerous corporate university functions. How do you organize to ensure that curriculum is current, complete, and consistent across the different elements of the PLM?

The Curricula Development and Support Center (CDSC) is responsible for integration and maintenance of the PLM elements. The CDSC is organized into five acquisition-related curricula focused centers: Program Management, Contracting, Logistics and Sustainment, Business, and Engineering and Technology. These five centers have a total of 16 individual performance learning model (PLM) directors, who are responsible for integrating and maintaining the curricula of the specific Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) career field elements. CDSC also includes the center for Rapid Deployment Training and Performance Support, providing leadership of these PLM elements.

How do the PLM directors develop curriculum in a performance learning environment?

The performance learning environment poses unique opportunities and challenges for the curriculum developer. Classroom instruction remains the foundation of the PLM. Most level 2 and level 3 DAWIA certification courses include classroom instruction. The classroom allows the curriculum designer to easily address multiple student learning styles by incorporating a variety of teaching methods, such as lecture, discussion, demonstration, performance, simulation, case studies, and cooperative learning. The direct student-instructor interface provides each with the ability to assess progress and subject matter comprehension. Unfortunately, a reality of this type of curriculum is that it results in high recurring delivery costs, and the student typically only gets one opportunity, usually early in his or her career, to attend. The PLM was developed to address these realities.

Besides the classroom, online, and distance learning experiences, what other assets does DAU bring to the acquisition workforce?

The DAU Knowledge Management staff has provided a

wealth of information for use by the AT&L workforce.

The Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Knowledge Sharing System (AKSS) provides a library of mandatory policy, including guidebooks, training opportunities, software tools, acquisition news, and related acquisition links. As a function of the AKSS, DAU operates the Ask-a-Professor program by which users can solicit assistance directly from DAU and other DoD experts. Questions and answers are maintained for reference by the AT&L community in a function-oriented searchable database.

As an outgrowth of the expanded search capability in the AKSS, DAU has developed the ACQuire capability. ACQuire is a comprehensive "Search and Find" tool that will become the equivalent of popular search engines for the AT&L workforce. The difference between these popular search engines and ACQuire is the focus by ACQuire on providing assets from well-managed and trusted AT&L Websites and document repositories; and providing multiple approaches for the workforce to find answers to their questions. In addition to the basic, yet highly advanced, search engine, additional "find" tools will be added, such as a Web-enabled Life Cycle Framework Chart.

The Acquisition Community Connection (ACC) is a publicly accessible system of knowledge communities focused on capturing, collaborating, and sharing "discretionary job support" knowledge across DoD's AT&L workforce (government and industry). Communities in the ACC include all major AT&L functions and a growing number of special topics.

DAU is developing a comprehensive set of Knowledge Document Gateways. The first Knowledge Document Gateway, the Defense Acquisition Guidebook (DAG), was launched in early FY05. In this gateway, the Defense Acquisition System policy and guidance documents, DoD Directive 5000.1, DoD Instruction 5000.2 and DoD Guidebook, have been Web-enabled and provide links to related knowledge assets. The second Knowledge Document Gateway, the Integrated Framework Chart (IFC), was launched in early FY06. The IFC serves as a pictorial roadmap of most key activities in the systems acquisition process. The chart is based on information in the *Defense Acquisition Guidebook* and key DoD policy documents.

Last, but not least, DAU is developing a comprehensive set of what we call Workflow Performance and Learning Tools (WPLT). Workflow Performance and Learning Tools are major "job support and guidance" tools that provide step-by-step process information (such as how to develop a required milestone plan), with the addition of embedded links throughout the process to: references, templates, examples, supplemental "wizards," formal training materials, ACC knowledge communities, and experts. Initial concept development and tool prototypes developed in FY05 include Performance Based Logistics Toolkit, Contract Pricing, and Performance Based Services Acquisition. The PBL Toolkit as accessible at: *https://acc.dau.mil/pbltoolkit*

How does DAU help prepare students to utilize knowledge and skills after class ends?

DAU incorporates the entire suite of knowledge assets depicted in the Performance Learning Model into the classroom experience. DAU course developers are taking advantage of the DAU knowledge assets by requiring students to access reference documents, guidebooks, handbooks, related Websites, and practical examples, and to conduct task collaborations as an integral part of course preparation and execution, imitating and exemplifying everyday tasks within the AT&L community. Students thus gain familiarity with the content and capability of DAU knowledge assets related to their work environment through active classroom exercises. By doing this, DAU creates a "train as you work and work as you train" environment.

How is knowledge sharing supporting the Engaged Learner concept?

Knowledge sharing is the first-line learning asset of the Engaged Learner. Not only is Knowledge sharing an integral part of the PLM but also it is key to supporting the Engaged Learner. Our communities of practice encourage an active dialogue with the learner, facilitate learning at the point of need, and support real-time job performance. Knowledge Document Gateways provide quick and easy access to formal process information, linked to a host of additional knowledge assets and experts that reside in the present family of DoD Knowledge Sharing Systems, the future repository of best practices, and the future repository of DAU's formally developed learning assets—DAU's Learning Asset Digital Repository (LEADR). Search and find systems like ACQuire minimize the time needed by the workforce to find the policy, processes, tools, and experts needed for job support and engaged learning. The addition of comprehensive Workflow Performance and Learning Tools will support learning during the execution of just-in-time job tasks and problem-solving activity.

My view is that we have to provide access to learning assets when and where the workforce needs them or when and where the "engaged learner" has a need. Our knowledge systems provide 24/7 support to the workforce and are focused on job support. An example of this is the Performance Based Logistics (PBL) Toolkit (a workflow learning tool) we recently launched which provides program managers and logistics managers with a comprehensive resource to guide them through the process steps of developing and implementing a PBL strategy.

How effectively does DAU respond to emergent requirements? What is your speed to market?

We have been very effective in responding to the needs of our customers. For example, shortly after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, we stood up a Hurricane Katrina Resource Community of Practice in just one day to support the acquisition workforce involved in the relief efforts. The goal was to develop a repository of applicable information

and resources, which includes policy and guidance information, related links, and other supporting resources.

DAU's knowledge sharing team leverages the rapid response products developed by DAU's Rapid Deployment Training (RDT) directorate and our Continuous Learning (CL) module team. An example of this is how DAU supported the rapid training and job support needs of the workforce on DoD's Unique Identification system initiative. Immediately our RDT team developed focused briefings on the subject and made face-to-face presentations around the country through its regional campuses. A formal two to three hour continuous learning module was developed. Via our Acquisition Community Connection (ACC), we quickly stood up a community for Unique Identification (UID) to provide relevant and current official UID program information and implementation experiences that could be shared with acquisition programs.

Can you offer an example of how you have been able to accomplish all these achievements with a stable rather than growing funding line?

We are always looking at how we can do business more efficiently. For example, this past August DAU brought in-house its Learning Management System (LMS) hosting, which had previously been hosted by another government agency. The move was done for sound business reasons. It was clear we could produce cost savings by consolidating and at the same time conduct a major re-capitalization of the LMS hardware. As a result, DAU has replaced a system that had reached its maximum capacity of 20,000 enrolled students with a system that can support 50,000 students with a 30 percent improvement in performance and is easily expandable to accommodate future growth.

Have you realized both tangible and intangible results?

Absolutely. Adaptability, speed, and customer-targeted training are qualities greatly valued at DAU. Our strategic plan is focused on aggressively moving forward with e-learning, knowledge sharing, and continuing the transition to a case-based training environment. Through our strategic plan, we are building an organizational culture that empowers the DAU workforce, encourages innovation, and establishes strategic alliances and partnerships with the private sector and field organizations.

The current and emerging distance learning technologies have allowed us to re-engineer our curriculum across our 15 different career fields. For example, the re-engineering of the courses within the program management career field resulted in a reduction of annual student training weeks from 36,120 to 10,000 for the Level III certification program. The difference in those figures can be translated into 300 annual work years returned to the field. In addition, the annual throughput for the ACQ-101 course increased from 3,000 to over 11,000 graduates in just three years.

What keeps DAU out in front of the curve?

Two words: *Learner-centricity.* As we built the PLM, we reorganized DAU toward being more learner-centric. We are changed our culture to incorporate this perspective in everything we do. We redeployed our teaching faculty to our customers' locations in five national regions in alignment with the AT&L workforce concentration areas. This has paid great dividends for both DAU and the workforce, as it minimizes time spent traveling to training sites away from the families and workplaces. In addition, we are able to conduct on-site performance support and consulting and provide responsive solutions to real world problems. This performance support also helps the faculty and our curricula maintain relevance and currency to the workplace environment.

To achieve our vision to become the premier DoD corporate university, we put into place the right support structure, streamlined our organization, and implemented world-class business processes that enabled us to deliver the best learning products in the most cost-effective manner. We streamlined not only our organization, but also seamlessly integrated training requirements, strategic planning, budgeting, cost accounting, faculty work load, and our other key processes into an enterprise-wide system, leveraging modern information technologies.

The result is an organization with enormous capability and opportunity, with a faculty and staff second to none.

What "DAU best practices" do you feel others could utilize?

Our experience at DAU has shown several "best practices" that would well serve any other learning organization:

A. *Encourage focus and flexibility.* Difficult crossroads lie ahead, and like any other innovative approach, if you get it wrong in the early stages, your later choices will be reduced. For us, this pathway is guided by our "Performance Learning Roadmap." The Roadmap's focus is in the definition of the properties of a system that allows for certain actions that will encourage specific types of desirable outcomes or skills.

B. *Deliver content in multiple modes.* Moving to e-Learning does not have to mean a loss of active and social learning. The key to success is a balance between applying useful traditional classroom concepts and the implemen-tation of innovations using the best of networked technologies. Successful and productive online teaching is a result of positive, scalable, and affordable e-learning projects and processes.

C. *Manage your content.* Content is a strategic asset. It requires a disciplined approach with appropriate learning object toolsets, but it can pay back many-fold.

D. *Design from the learner's perspective.* Consider the entire learner experience. You want students to show up, persist, and perform well. Validate the course in a real setting with real students and faculty. Measure your

success, including student satisfaction and retention, as well as the learner demand or "pull" for new skills rather than the amount of outmoded content "pushed" at them by others.

E. *Experiment, adapt, and improve.* There are five pillars of online learning: learning effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, access, faculty satisfaction, and student satisfaction. Engaged learning is not a one-time goal or project, but it is an ongoing effort of innovation guided through practical experience.

F. *Prepare for future technology.* The future learning "classroom" will be significantly extended via wide-area and local-area wireless technologies to deliver content beyond the home or office to airports, commuter trains, or even the beach. And even within the classroom, collaboration technology will integrate classroom and e-learning experiences. This new technology doesn't replace, but it will enhance the interaction between learners, instructors, and content.

G. *Consider where we are heading.* What do you think the future holds with regard to ability to serve the knowledge needs of tomorrow's workplace? For example:

- The continuing state of the economy will lead to more off-the-shelf course purchases, as companies take advantage of the least expensive way to get significant ROI via e-learning.
- As budget constraints force educators to adopt stronger ROI justifications, more thought will go into instructional design and building better, more engaging content.
- SCORM specifications will be better understood, and we will see more and more use of reusable learning objects.
- "Community" will continue to be a hot topic.
- Substantial open source alternatives will grow in popularity.

The DAU vision is exciting. You'll see new, highly collaborative and visual technologies for education, such as better gaming and simulation use. Quality assurance will grow as the cornerstone for proof of investment and validation. And, most important, learning will start being fun.

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Frank J. Anderson, Jr. *is President of the Defense Acquisition University (DAU). In 2002, he was recognized by the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) as one of ten persons specially selected as E-Learning Champions of the Year. In October 2002, Mr. Anderson was also recognized as the* **Leader of the Year** *at the 2002 Corporate University Best-In-Class (CUBIC) awards conference. In 2004, Mr. Anderson received the Department of Defense Distinguished Civilian Service Award. This award is the highest given by the Secretary of Defense to career employees whose careers reflect exceptional devotion to duty and extremely significant contributions of broad scope to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement in DoD operations. Under his leadership, DAU*

has received numerous awards for excellence in e-learning and as one of the top corporate universities in the United States.

Mr. Anderson is a retired Brigadier General, United States Air Force. He previously served as Vice President of the Defense Acquisition University and led the strategic planning process that shaped the current DAU reengineering initiatives. He was formerly Commandant of the Defense Systems Management College, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Contracting, and Air Force Competition Advocate General. He also served as the first chairman of the Federal Inter-agency Working Group for Alternate Dispute Resolution. He is a graduate of the Defense Systems Management College, Air Command Staff College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and has undergraduate and graduate degrees in business.

***Badrul H. Khan**, a Contributing Editor, is Associate Professor of Educational Technology Leadership at the George Washington University and founder of BooksToRead.com, a recommended readings site on the Internet. He is an international speaker, author, educator, and consultant in the field of e-learning and educational technology (e-mail: **khan@gwu.edu** Website: **http://BadrulKhan.com/khan**). His recent books include **Managing E-Learning Strategies** and **E-Learning QUICK Checklist.** Dr. Khan acknowledges the assistance of Dr. Bob Ainsley and Dr. Laura Granato with this interview. This is the fourth in an ongoing series.*